Problems? The Commander doesn’t teach responsibility. The approach doesn’t help children internalize values or the principles behind the rules.

The commander tends to use ultimatums. Ultimatums foster powerlessness. Avoid them like the plague. Offer choices instead. Choices are empowering.

Main lessons learned- Fear Authority or Defy Authority

To dispel some confusion- Shawn Macgregor, In-Home Family Skills Worker, at Leech Lake Child Welfare, has a thorough parenting program with a bunch of great topics called Power Parenting. Of course, I had no intention of confusing folks familiar with her program. **So, I’m changing my title to Empower Parenting.** This was actually my first choice. The title was just a bit awkward for our conference brochure.

Is it possible to live on our own? We need to learn how to live relationally with a sense of community. So, legitimate interdependence might be a better goal.

We don’t have children to keep them, but to give them away, hopefully, to make the world a better place. Will Bemidji, Bena, Bagley or Boston be a better place because they live there? Love is more about giving than receiving. Giving our children their freedom is a grand expression of our love. This should help parents deal with the empty nest syndrome.

Think of this as the preferred outcome or result. All of your methods, actions and activities should help you reach this end.

**There are two roles that we all fall into that fail to reach the goal of Legitimate Interdependence. Let’s start here:**

Parent Roles- the Commander in Chief
This approach emphasizes external control at the expense of fostering the child’s ability to control themselves. It also emphasizes authority over relationship.

What does it feel like to be parented this way?
The second role is on the other end of the spectrum. It is: The Rescuer or the Permissive Parent

This role emphasizes companionship and insulating the child from the negative consequences of their behavior. The parent wants their child to feel good and be free. These kids tend to learn their values from their peers or on the street. This approach moves away from the idea that kids might have something to learn from their elders. Their peers tend to be in similar, less supervised situations. This can have a toxic effect.

What does it feel like to be parented this way?

Problems? It doesn’t teach responsibility. Children don’t see the ramifications of their behavior or that their decisions have consequences. Children are insulated from the sting of very important life lessons.

These children are indulged with privilege or permission. This results in grandiose ambitions with no concept or plan of the amount of work necessary to reach their goals.

Cesar Milan- “Did you think you love your pet by not giving your puppy any rules, boundaries and limitations? “Oh, no, we’re making the same mistakes with our kids!

The Rescuer doesn’t help children internalize values or the principles behind the rules.

Main lesson learned- No one has the right to tell you what to do

Survey- Which parent, creates the bigger monster, the super strict parent or the permissive parent?
The tale of two brothers:

Overmanager
What happens if you grow up in a family where one parent is the Commander while the other parent’s role is to rescue the child from the authoritative mom or dad?

This dynamic will create the Master Manipulator.

**What is a more effective alternative role for parents?**

**Manager**

The manager will use a relational, structured approach that guides their child toward adulthood and freedom. It emphasized teaching important values conceptually and behaviorally. It fosters independent thinking and self-control

A bit on **Sheltering** - The goal is to move toward increasing freedom. However, you want to limit toxic influences along the way. We are easily corrupted and slowly restored. I will discuss this in a little more detail in a minute or two.

**The role as Manager does not really capture the heart of parenting. Parenting is built on three pillars or a three-tiered foundation.**

**Three Pillars of Parenting**

**Love** - True love is not so much an affectionate feeling. It is a decision you make to work in another’s best interest. It requires a mature parent with something to give. Needy, codependent parents are trying to meet their own needs. They do not have much left over for their children.

**Teaching** is not so much informational as it is Formational. For better or worse, you will be modeling your message. Your behavior will speak louder than your words. There are many influences vying for your child’s heart. They don’t necessarily share your love, your hope for your child’s future. Unfortunately, you may not get to your child first. But, you at least need to get to them.

Briefly, **Positive Discipline** is discipline that also loves and teaches.
Back to teaching for a moment:

Principles have more power than rules

A more legalistic, rule oriented approach leads to judgment and condemnation. Rules can take the place of genuine relationship and communication. The emphasis will move from teaching to enforcing.

What happens if you break a rule and it was kind of fun? Will the guilt or fear keep you from doing it again? Probably not. You need the reason behind the rule. Why a child does something is more important than what they do. If you embrace the reason for the rule, the principle behind the rule, the rest will follow naturally.

Teach values and principles that a child can carry around with them. Reinforce these values with structure and positive discipline.

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Our rules tend to spring from our deepest fears. There are 5 Universal Fears of all Parents.

**The Five Universal Fears of Parents**

- harmful sexual behavior
- drugs and alcohol
- trouble with the law
- death or injury
- threats to their long term well being and happiness

Parents have very active imaginations. If a child runs away, the parent can string all these worries together. They create sleepless nights. When we discover our children have headed down the wrong path, these concerns will put a knot in your stomach.

Unfortunately, the things we worry about the most are the very things we're least apt to discuss. Speak to them.
Ideally, we’re always taking advantage of teachable moments. But, if there are important issues you have not discussed, I challenge you to do so. Give them the reason behind the rule. So . . .

**Set a Date**

- sex, love and commitment
- addiction and pleasure hooks
- respect
- hopes for their future
- other values and beliefs you hold dear
- identity

Your kids are getting facts about sex and the biological mechanics in school. The school is not teaching sexual values. Your child's peers and the media are offering their opinion on sex and relationships. You really need to give them your perspective.

Other values may include spiritual or cultural beliefs you consider essential. It could reflect other concerns like your love of the outdoors, environmental protection, equality, justice, your love of athletics . . .

Identity- Identity is at the core of who we are. I happen to disagree with much of what is taught about a child’s identity in public education. Most of the ideas are naturalistic and provide little basis for equality, rationality, purpose, freedom or moral capacity. Just read B.F. Skinner and you will see what I mean. Are you a product of your environment? Or, are you more a product of your decisions and responses? The first notion is self-contradictory. It is also completely disempowering. Empowerment means that we have some control over our destinies. Freedom, even the freedom to error is at the heart of our fundamental nature.

Basically, you need to help your children build a core. Impart values and an identity.

**Responsible = Response able**

or

“able to respond”

that’s empowerment!

Much of modern psychology asserts that we are controlled by complex causes, such as, sexual and aggressive impulses, classical or operant conditioning . . . We are powerless. Freedom is an illusion. Of course, the theorists somehow believe they were free to come up with their theories. If their theories were a bi-product of complex causes, why would we believe them to be true?

I gladly leave these low views of human nature behind. We need a consistent theory with explanatory power. Steven Covey’s “Proactively” really captures the idea that we are capable decision makers. We can respond not just react.
When it comes to empowerment, here's my first, big, fat, parenting tip. Put the responsibility back on the child. Kids will get in trouble. They are capable insters. You are not the only one influencing their beliefs, attitudes and actions. When a child gets in trouble, let them know that the ball has clearly landed in their court. I learned this one from Corwin Kronenberg. Here's what you say,

“You Got a Problem!” There are some variations on this useful expression. You might try, “Now, that is a problem. I’m just glad it isn’t mine.”

Put the responsibility back on the child. Get them involved in considering the positive or negative consequences of their behavior. Try to see if they can solve the problem. If they get stuck, you can offer some possible solutions. This was a major discovery for me. It did wonders for my parenting.

We’re going to shift the focus from teaching to Positive Discipline.

Positive Discipline:

The art of using reasonable rules and effective consequences combined with caring relationships to teach children positive values and behavior.

The 3 pillars should always run at full strength. Discipline should be in the child’s best interest. Discipline in love. Discipline should teach.

I like it when kids get caught. It presents you with an opportunity to teach.

Keys to reasonable rules:

1. come from values and beliefs
2. clear, consistent, understood by all

If you can’t find a reason for the rule, you probably shouldn’t have the rule. Rules should not be arbitrary. They should flow from your values. It’s good to have a family meeting and lay out the standards for your home. Most kids will agree, there should be some standards for decent treatment.

Here’s a magic way to help define your family values:
I talked to one of the administrators after the Red Lake shooting. He was adamant that unfiltered Internet access, particularly in a child’s bedroom, is a recipe for disaster. I would agree. So, be prudent. Kids need risk and opportunity to fail. They don’t need someone feeding them lies or garbage.

Some parents have a hard time with #3. It logically follows from the previous 2. If the rules reflect the family values, they are important to everyone in the family. The adults are modeling the values. In some way they apply to everyone.

4. Guided freedom- You are rightly more protective when your children are young and more vulnerable. As they get older, they can handle more freedom and the natural sting of a really poor choice.

Where do I draw the line?

Is it morally or physically dangerous?

Developmental diversions?

Toxic identities?
1. Discipline should educate in a logical fashion. “You abuse it; you lose it.”
2. Restorative consequences are the bomb. The child has the opportunity to fix the hurt or damage done. They take personal responsibility for their decisions. When amends have been made, they get a chance to restore themselves to those whom they may have offended.

**Restoring Trust:** Trust = respectful and responsible action + open and honest communication.
### Keys to effective consequences:

1. relate directly to offense  
2. restorative rather than punitive  
3. hand responsibility and power back to the child  
4. give leverage to the parent/teacher

2. Discipline vs. Punishment–Punishment is basically trying to make a child feel bad to make their behavior better. Most of the kids I work with already feel bad. Feeling bad is a big part of why they are misbehaving. Feeling worse will not improve their behavior.  
3. Again, it's more about formation than disseminating information.  
4. Rules without relationship lead to rebellion. Discipline in love will always produce better results. To borrow from George Zimmer, "You're going to like the way it works; I guarantee it."

1) Develop Rules openly with an eye to reflecting values and beliefs.  
2) Use consequences that promote thoughtful change of behavior rather than trying to make the child feel bad.  
3) Model desired behavior whenever possible.  
4) Use discipline as an opportunity to teach and build relationship.  
5) Don’t stay stuck. Work with the child to find opportunities to move forward.

3. “You've got a problem!” Involve the child in determining the consequence.  
4. Time is on your side. Use contingency consequences. You can say, “Yes, when . . . “  

Swap their chore with one of yours, if the chore is time sensitive.